

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

JULY 1941

DOCUMENTARY—THE CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF REALITY

VOL 2 No 7 PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY FILM CENTRE 34 SOHO SQUARE LONDON W1 SIXPENCE

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Much Ado About Something

THE DEFEAT of the Ministry of Information in its recent struggle for increased powers was appropriately announced in the House of Commons by Sir John Anderson, the choice of whom as Government spokesman would appear to have been a definite indication that neither the War Cabinet nor the Prime Minister have any real belief in the importance of propaganda, or, for that matter, the informational services. Briefly stated, the policy of the Government is retention of the Foreign Office stranglehold, refusal to grant greater responsibility as regards news to the M.O.I., and in general the maintenance of the *status quo*—that is, chaotic and unco-ordinated conditions due to the fact that the M.O.I. is debarred from any authoritative say in the expression of national policy. Practically the entire press (including *The Times*) has greeted the Government's decision with something near execration; and his attitude correctly expresses the general feeling of the

public. It is to be hoped that the pressure of opinion will be sufficiently strong to force further and fuller consideration of the problem on the Government. The present situation means that no single division of the M.O.I. can hope to improve its work in anything other than minor details of efficiency. The Films Division, for instance, to which Duff Cooper paid a not unjustified tribute, is still in the anomalous position of planning its production programmes in a tentative and piecemeal manner, lacking any hint of that directive policy without which the use of film as an expressive weapon is severely hampered. The least one can hope is that the M.O.I.'s defeat means a victory only for *laissez-faire* and not also for the forces of reaction. Nevertheless, the strengthening of the Foreign Office's position must be viewed with the gravest misgivings, for that department is only too clearly entirely incompetent to cope with public as distinct from diplomatic needs. Nor, for that matter, can one welcome the control of the projection of

Britain abroad by a department whose foreign public relations have been so conspicuously unsuccessful in recent years. Meantime, we hope that the Minister of Information will specially note the opportunity offered by Anderson's remarks regarding the British Council, which ran as follows:—

"Another agency hitherto entirely detached is the British Council. Most of their activities are educational and cultural, and these will continue as at present. They have, however, some propaganda activities, and these will in future be carried on subject to the prior approval of the Minister of Information who will appoint a special officer to keep in touch with the Council. All the film work of the Council will be carried out in consultation with the Ministry of Information."

There would appear to be something of a chance here of influencing and improving British Council activities—especially as regards films.

Films Council Please Note

THE NUMBER of British feature films to be produced in the forthcoming year cannot satisfy the requirements of the Quota Act.

Consequently, both renters and the exhibitors are calling for a reduction in the percentage of British films they must acquire or show under the terms of the Act. There is one solution that has been put forward in various trade papers and which has received support from many branches of the Exhibitors' Association. This proposal is to allow British short films to count for quota against American long films. The suggestion is that the minimum of £7,500 worth of labour required by the quota cost clause to be spent on a quota feature film, should be spread over four to six short films.

The proposal has a great many advantages. In the first instance it would allow a reasonable production budget to be allocated to short-film production, since films to benefit from quota would need to show a labour cost somewhere in the region of £1,500. Hitherto the maximum that could be spent on a short film in this country, with a chance of making even a small profit, was often not much more than £250, this sum covering all production expenses including labour; on this basis it was exceptionally difficult to turn out quality films. The allocation of sums in the region of £3,000 (of which £1,500 would be for labour costs) to short film productions might well result in Shorts becoming a power in foreign markets as well as at home.

There have been a variety of proposals for establishing the British short film economically, but many people consider that this is the first which could easily and practically be brought about immediately.

The Man who Knew too Much

IT IS GOOD to hear that the Army is now beginning to appreciate the value of the film expert within its ranks. A leading figure in the field of non-theatrical distribution who was recently conscripted gave his civil life qualifications in the normal way at enlistment. A few weeks later he was asked by his sergeant whether he was "the chap who knew about films."

He replied in the affirmative and was immediately taken off to see the Company-Sergeant-Major. The Company-Sergeant-Major put the same question and received the same answer. The film expert was eyed sternly and taken in due course before the Regimental-Sergeant-Major. This exalted personage wished to know whether he had before him "the man who knew about films." Being convinced that it was indeed so, he took action, with the result that this rare private soldier was ushered into no less holy a presence than that of the Adjutant. Before our hero could announce that he was "the man who knew about films" the Adjutant had put the inevitable question. When the answer was given it became clear that the end of the journey had been reached. The Adjutant said "We are having a magic lantern show next week. I want you to operate the lantern." The non-theatrical distribution expert had not come all this way for nothing. He could not recall ever having set eyes on a magic lantern, but he would not let down the reputation of the film industry. He accepted the task and, having retired from the Presence, he proceeded to get in touch with the soldier who gave the magic lantern shows in a neighbouring camp. He mastered the art so successfully that when the day came the show passed off without a hitch. His comment was that "In the Army no square hole must ever be filled by anything but a square peg".

Good News

IT IS REPORTED from Canada that John Grierson has now "been placed in supreme charge of all moving-picture activities of the Canadian Government." This statement brings to a logical conclusion the policy—pursued over some years by the Canadian Government—of forming a focal point for the use of films for national expression and public information both at home and overseas. Of all the Dominions Canada has always been to the forefront in the use of films, and it will be remembered that the original nucleus of the Empire Film Library included a very large number of films obtained from the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau. Under the Canadian Films Act, in the drafting of which Grierson worked at the request of the Canadian Government two years before the war, the position of the Bureau and of other official film bodies in Canada was bound to become anomalous. It is, therefore, clearly a wise and constructive step to absorb and co-ordinate all these activities under a single department. No one will question Canada's good fortune in having obtained documentary's founder as its chief executive. Much though Grierson's drive and genius has been missed over here since the outbreak of war, it is clearly of the highest importance that his services should be available to a great nation in the New World, whose self-expression is a matter of vital interest in the rapid developments of the present age. A new and vigorous school of documentary is now all set for rapid development in Canada. It will no doubt co-operate with the documentary movement in the United States; and, just as importantly, it will signal to other Dominions the need for a similar film approach, with the ultimate aim of an inter-Imperial film service whose existence in all respects would be of incalculable value to the peoples of the Commonwealth.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

This editorial was written before the Debates on propaganda in the Lords and the Commons. The Government announcements only serve, in our view, to strengthen the opinions expressed.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL is apprehensive of its future. Recent statements make it clear that the Council is conscious of the need to justify its present organisation under the Foreign Office, and is anxious to avoid incorporation in the other national propaganda and informational service.

The statement of the British Council's new Chairman, Sir Malcolm Robertson, given to a Sunday newspaper, was obviously directed to these ends. The main contention he expressed as follows: "It is not our business to spread opinion on the war, nor are we here for political purposes. We try to show the world British culture and the British way of life. Our work is all the more welcome abroad because of its freedom from political propaganda."

Mr. Philip Guedalla, Chairman of the British Council Films Committee, in an introduction to their new film catalogue, states: "There is no attempt in this series to depict the nation's war effort or to state the issues which the war raises for ordinary men and women throughout the world . . . war propaganda in the narrow sense forms no part of it." The programme note of a show of British Council films at the New Gallery Cinema on June 17th, states: "The aim of the British Council is to hold a mirror to the face of Britain and her people in their everyday lives and work . . . though they are not directly concerned with warfare or political matters, these films are intimately bound up with the war effort of the nation . . . throughout the world men are asking what Britain has to offer as against that species of new order under which, according to the German propaganda films, the initiated enjoy the blessings of a superior education, social services and way of life generally."

Apart from the discreet shift of position with regard to the war effort which has apparently taken place between the time of Mr. Guedalla's introductory note and the show on June 17th, all these statements have one common purpose and that is to persuade—whoever must be persuaded—that the function of the British Council must remain quite distinct from that of the Ministry of Information. In any case, the question immediately arises—is the Council's claim to "hold a mirror to the face of Britain" altogether accurate? Presumably their new film catalogue is a good reflection of the Council's general attitude to propaganda. This is best summed up by the three stills that precede their official newsreel of British news. The three stills are:—the Royal Heralds; Windsor Castle; and the Houses of Parliament. Their mirror therefore reflects only a very sectionalised side of Britain. These three photographs show where British Council interests lie. Though they have travelled a good way from their Travel Association Film Unit days, their point of view remains substantially the same. Their mirror of Britain is a mirror that reflects Lords, Wimbledon, the Derby, the Old English inn, the beautiful countryside, our

glorious old buildings—the heritage of the past, and all's right with the world.

Viewing the programme of films which they showed on June 17th, and which they must obviously have picked as the best they had to offer, one gets a strong impression that despite these claims, they are, in fact, engaged in war propaganda. Leaving aside the newsreel, which reports on and about war progress, the first film, *Learning to Live*, describes how British education differs fundamentally from the Nazi ideal, by emphasising the individuality of the child, and by emphasising that its methods are not less modern. Yet this is supposed not to be propaganda. In fact, the film shows a highly idealised picture of British education which bears little relation to the facts. *Learning to Live* reveals a great disrespect for accurate information, and as regards those educationalists in foreign countries who may see the film, it will obviously do harm, as they cannot be altogether unaware of the educational position in this country, having perhaps seen documentary films on the same subject which have, while not disguising existing problems, given a picture of true democratic initiative. The second film, *John Bull*, is a sales film for English pedigree cattle. Its obvious job is to sell the South American breeder on the virtue of the British bull. The fourth film, *Ulster*, shows how the six counties rallied to the Empire's call, and is straightforward war propaganda. The last film, *Queen Cotton*, is again a sales film of the cotton industry. It is designed for South America and the purpose, as in the case of *John Bull*, is presumably to obtain foreign currency to be used for the purchase of war supplies overseas. It becomes only too obvious from seeing the films and reading the catalogue, that the work of the British Council should not be separated from the general national effort at overseas projection during the greatest crisis that the country has ever faced.

Yet the British Council seems most anxious not to be associated with what they call "political propaganda." If we go to the dictionary we find that Mr Fowler's definition of politics is "Science of or a treatise on state organisation, affairs of state, questions of policy". If we look at the definition of propaganda we find "Association or scheme for propagating a doctrine or practice". If we take these two definitions, it becomes apparent that the British Council's conception of its job leads it to the rather alarming position of disassociating itself from our reasons for fighting in this war and from our reasons for continuing to resist. If we are fighting the war for the preservation of our way of life, and the British Council say that their job is to hold a mirror up to that way of life, then surely they are engaged in political propaganda.

At its best, propaganda is the dissemination of information, and one cannot see in what way, for instance, the Ministry of

Information film *Merchant Seamen* differs from the British Council film *Sailors without Uniform*, although no filmgoer will fail to realise which is the better film.

If we go back to Sir Malcolm Robertson's statement we find that he went on to say "Wherever I went I found French, Italian and German schools—even American—but nothing British. We have vast interests in China, yet for years the Chinese have looked more to the United States for education. For sixty or seventy years we have been a power in Egypt, yet the language spoken by leading Egyptians is French. Maltese and Italian are spoken in Malta, and in the Rock of Gibraltar, British for two hundred years, it is Spanish that we hear. It is an outrage." One does not know if the inference to be drawn from this latter statement of Sir Malcolm is that these incomprehensible people should speak English, but the important

point is, what does he propose to do about them, and how?

One sometimes wonders whether the "mirror held up" by the British Council Films Committee is not—even with the best will in the world—a mirror which distorts the true policy of a country (and its War Cabinet) engaged in a total war in defence of democracy.

There would be no possible objection to the British Council's separate film activities could these be proved to fulfil any useful national purpose. This has not been established and in these circumstances there appears to be no reason why the British Council's work should not be taken over by the M.O.I. Films Division, which has, in some measure, proved its value to the national war effort in its production and distribution of films, both for home and overseas use.

WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC WANT?

By Dr. JEKYLL and Mr. HYDE

IT IS no chance that the two universal media of entertainment of this century should also be the two basic weapons of the propagandist. It is, however, not sufficiently realised that both in films and in radio the entertainment aspect came first, and the propagandist and educational aspect second. The propagandist and the educationist therefore started with an initial disadvantage in that the public to whom they were appealing were not used to the idea of something other than entertainment (and straight news) being presented to them by these means. Here, of course, cinema was at a greater disadvantage than radio, since the latter could run continuous day and night services on a number of different wavelengths and thus find room for a bit of everything. Nevertheless, even radio was dealing in the mass with an audience whose basic background belonged largely to that of the movie and the popular press.

In peacetime many inquirers and critics have tried to tackle the problems raised by this situation. Starting from the assumption, hardly perhaps unwarranted, that much mass entertainment is second-rate, if not actually debased, they have tried to find means of "improving" entertainment standards. Their efforts have usually been countered by the old parrot-cry "the public gets what it wants"; and nobody understood them when they replied that this is not the same as the public getting what it *needs*—for in this latter phrase one can easily smell the patronising halitosis of the Superior Intelligence.

But in point of fact they were right; if by "needs" they meant those things for which humans instinctively crave and without some measure of which they cannot really be happy. In terms of our present thesis, we may say that people's needs are (1) *Entertainment*, (2) *Information*, and (3) *Participation*.

Entertainment and *Information* they get in varying degrees, but the sense of *Participation* is only too often completely lacking. Too much of their share in the creative activities of the group in which they live is vicarious, instead of direct. At a Cup-Final for instance, direct participation comes only to twenty-two people out of the thousands present. It is, however,

easy to over-simplify this point, since the very media under discussion are bound to be vicarious in the sense in which we are at present speaking. Thus the major problem to-day is a double one: firstly, to raise the standards of vicarious participation to a level which will satisfy man's often unconscious desire to share in creative things, and secondly to make it possible for each individual to enjoy *direct* creative participation within his own immediate group. This, as both democrats and fascists have discovered, is not merely a tall order, but also an urgent problem.

To many investigators, therefore, the essential position is this: the universal need of this century is for the re-creation of our community sense. Everyone is in some degree or other creative, but in modern society many people feel at a loss because they can see no proper outlet for their creative instincts. For, whereas in earlier communities the creative sense was more often than not satisfied by daily work, nowadays, with the increase of mass-production in industry and office, creation and work are nearly always divorced, except in the case of high executives or directors. Hence, no doubt, the tendency to some form of agricultural work (be it only a window box or a full two acres in Surrey) which has been a marked and growing feature—particularly during the last twenty years. Hence, too, the various group movements which—especially in the realm of Art—and of Arts and Crafts—have mushroomed their way across twentieth-century civilisations.

Now cinema and radio audiences are essentially groups, although their constitution is superficially different, since cinema deals with mass groups gathered together in a specific place for a specific purpose, while radio is dealing with similar groups widely dispersed in small units and varied locations (the majority being in individual homes). This difference is extremely important, and affects technique particularly; but in considering the general impact of the two media we can on the whole assume that they are both catering really for the same mass audience.

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Cinema and radio are part of everybody's normal life. Both of them represent the ideas of a very small group of people as to what very large masses of people want. What check is there that these minority ideas give majority satisfaction? In movies there is one check—and one only—box-office. If a sufficient number of people fail to pay to see a certain film, the purveyors of that film have to consider why. It is a curious and significant thing that they very seldom seem to be able to find out.

However that may be, the audience reaction to movies is much more easy to see (if not to analyse) than the audience reaction to radio—for here the commercial check utterly breaks down, since nearly everyone is prepared to pay an odd ten shillings for an almost limitless choice of all sorts of programmes over a period of 8,760 hours. Add to this the fact that the choice of programmes on the medium wave alone spans the whole of Europe, and the magnitude of the problem, even from a theoretical rather than a practical point of view, becomes obvious.

Thus we get the situation that the film people think they are giving the public what it wants just as long as their receipts are satisfactory, while the radio people are in a position to claim that the mere possession of a radio set is an 'open sesame!' to the gratification of any level of intellectual or aesthetic taste. (The movie people may interject here that the money yardstick at least represents a *competitive* spirit in purveying entertainment, and may point to the superior quality of many of the U.S.A. radio programmes, which have as their basis the competition of advertising sponsors. It should, however, be pointed out that whereas a film is in itself the object which is being sold, a sponsored radio programme is in itself only an advertisement for the sale of another physical object.

In any case, whichever way you look at it, a vicious circle exists in both film and radio. The public is presented with a slab of entertainment; the public evinces no major signs of disapproval; so the purveyors say the public is getting what it wants, and go on presenting it. Failures, on this system, represent only intermittent breaks in the circuit, and in general everyone appears to be satisfied.

But no one really is. Nor, in point of fact, need there be a vicious circle. It has long been realised (among others, by the documentary people) that the circle can be broken at that point where a vague public discontent with the meretricious leaves a gap into which the element of mutual enlightenment can penetrate. The phrase *mutual enlightenment* is probably sufficiently accurate to represent everything we really mean by information and education. The attitude represented by the phrase is important, for it negates the attitude of the "superior intellect" and suggests the required attitude towards participation. For, if you really want to "raise the public's sense of appreciation" you must first remember to be humble (film magnates sometimes pretend to be humble, but don't let them take you in).

If the reader has so far borne with these restatements of obvious and well-known facts (neglected though they are), he will see that our investigation now leads us towards two inquiries—firstly into the general possibilities and secondly into a consideration of what is happening

in the realms of film and radio during the present war.

General considerations lead us first to the plain statement that it is untrue to say that the public has not got taste. It would be more sensible (if not easy to prove) to say that people naturally have good taste, but that the circumstances and environment of modern existence tend to debase it. Here we come to the factor of education, which splits into two elements—firstly, the education they receive while they're growing up—in State or privately maintained Schools and Universities, and secondly the education which they continue voluntarily to acquire as adults in the everyday world.

If child-education fails to provide the means by which the individual can (a) express himself creatively, and (b) participate, with a sense of his own individuality and a sense of responsibility, in the creative activities of the community—then child-education is not doing its job properly. It is all to the good that the tendency of present-day methods is to stress these very points, for it is here that the major possibility arises for constructing a really valuable thing out of the arts of movie and radio. For, starting from this point we can count on the ability of people at large to be good critics of what is put before them.

But intermingled with this viewpoint is, of course, the viewpoint of the makers of film and radio programmes—many of whom are sincere men, with a desire to do good stuff, but who feel themselves hampered by the inability of the public to appreciate anything other than the second-rate. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that both film-making and radio work are noted for the attraction which they have for people who are themselves intrinsically second-rate (or even worse). First-raters in both media are very much fewer in numbers than in any of the other arts.

Our second consideration is a vital one to-day, for it relates to the fact that both movie and radio are at present being intensively used for propaganda and for information. What possible check can there be on the effect of all these wartime films and radio programmes? How far can sporadic reports from regional centres, or even the B.B.C. listener research organisation get an accurate picture of real audience reactions? We are dealing with media in which the element of imagination and fantasy plays as important a part as does that of fact and reason. No questionnaire or poll can do more than give a Yes or No answer—and a Yes or No answer may beg the whole question either way.

There would appear to be no solution to this problem other than that our propagandists should abide strictly by the two canons of democratic expression and taste. By doing so they may avoid insulting the people for and about whom their programmes are made; and there is no reason to suppose that they cannot, in the end, produce films and radio programmes which will stimulate—instead of smothering—the active creative instincts of the general mass of people.

And in this, the yardstick for our propagandists is not a money yardstick nor a listener-research yardstick. It is the yardstick of absolute integrity, sincerity of purpose, and fearlessness in the face of all blimps who fear education, and fear, ultimately the participation of all people in the creative activities of a free community.

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four notable MERTON PARK PRODUCTIONS

★ *STEEL GOES TO SEA*

British Merchant Shipbuilding
against human interest background.
Dramatic emphasis achieved by
alternating use of sound and silence.

FULL CYCLE

How Britain pays for her imports
by the sweat and toil of the miners
of South Wales. Relying for its
emotional effect on the natural
drama of world trade.

★ *LEARNING TO LIVE*

Explaining to the foreigner the best
aspects of British Education and its
emphasis on character building. Its
appeal lies in child studies com-
pletely free of camera-consciousness
though photographed with a tech-
nique only possible by use of lights.

QUEEN COTTON (in Technicolor)

Lancashire's main industry and its
co-operation with the great British
couturiers to capture fashion leader-
ship. Through the use of colour and
rhythmic cutting this film gives
universal appeal to industrial se-
quences leading up to the display
of dresses, ending with the sharp
contrast of Britain at war.

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"A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A NEW WORLD"

By IVOR MONTAGU. Reprinted by courtesy of *The Anglo Soviet Review*

WITHOUT DOUBT the new Soviet film under this title must be one of the most ambitious documentary films ever made. The Moscow broadcasts of 2nd January reported that it is now completed and showing widely with great public success.

It is a "collective production". In documentary film history the subject of *A Day* will recall at once to the student *Berlin* and *World Melody* (both of Ruttmann), but the comparison immediately reveals the inadequacy of the resources of a private individual or firm to cope with any theme of the kind wider in scope than the "single city" of the former subject.

A Day is so much wider, in theme and authorship, that its closer parallel is no doubt the "Day in the Life of the World" which Maxim Gorky sought to prepare as a literary work some years ago. Through various literary organisations, both in the U.S.S.R. and abroad, also through working-class and political organisations, Gorky made an appeal for as many persons as were willing—persons unaccustomed to authorship as well as professional writers—to send him an account of how they spent one single selected day in 1936. The mass of material was to have been utilised under his guidance to compile a written work that should give a comparative glimpse of life in all countries at one given and arbitrary moment.

Gorky fell victim to a murder plot not long afterwards, it will be recollected, and I do not know whether the projected work is being completed by other hands or has been abandoned. It is clearly the inspiration of the documentary film we are discussing.

The task of supervising *A Day* was assigned to a group. A scenario was prepared. As far as we can judge this scenario was on the one hand detailed, exactly prescribing a great number of selected incidents, chosen to portray the theme, and planned so that camera units would in advance know what they were going to get and see that they got it; and on the other hand flexible, so that of innumerable scenes unforeseen and spontaneously selected on the spot as suitable for shooting, some might well be found to be useful for inclusion.

The day selected happened to be 24th August, 1940. The particular date had no significance. The theme was to be "the most important and typical events occurring in that one single day over the one-sixth of the earth comprised by the U.S.S.R."—events in the streets, on mountain pastures, in workshops, deep in the bowels of the earth in coal and iron mines, in scientific laboratories, in private houses, at meetings, carnivals, etc.

Ninety-seven cameramen were allotted to the scripted work. (I cannot imagine that this number has any mystic significance. Maybe 100 were allotted and 3 fell ill.) What was obviously by far the most important of the footage had to be

shot by them. But in addition numbers of other cameramen were sent out, and volunteers all over the U.S.S.R. were invited to collaborate, to shoot and send in anything they happened to see and that occurred to them as being possibly worth recording during that single day. Even the cameramen of features in course of production were authorised to break off for *A Day* if in the course of their labours that day, anything took place within their ken that they felt should be seized as it happened.

Here is the account of the finished film given on the radio broadcast:

"The sun rises on the Eastern Pacific coast. In Moscow it is still the evening before, but here Vladivostok wakes. A coastguard cutter is seen plying through the waters. The lighthouse lights go out, the flag is hoisted with the dawn. Work begins in factory and office.

"Vladivostok railway station. The Pacific Express is about to leave for the West—for Moscow, on the longest train journey in the world—nine days and nights. Passengers are at the windows of the train; a woman and child, a Red Army man. Why are they making this journey? What business takes them the long journey to the West? The Red Army man is on his way to a Commanders' school. He is to learn to be an officer. Here is a prospector; he has been seven years in a Far Eastern district. Now he is returning to Moscow for a whole year's leave.

"The scenery passes. The sun soon overtakes the train. Here we are at Lake Baikal. The train passes mountain ranges. New railway lines in construction. The volcanoes of Kamchatka. The chain of the Urals, dividing Asia from Europe. The huge Stalin metallurgical works at Magnitogorsk. Men are just knocking off work. Molten liquids blaze as they pour out of the crucibles.

"Moscow is asleep. Above the sleeping city blaze the ruby-red stars of the Kremlin. The bridges are deserted. The streets empty save for an occasional early car.

"The first to be up and doing are the announcers of the Radio Centre, Moscow. Soon they are at their posts at the microphones and throughout the world echoes the call: "Workers of all lands, unite!"

"Moscow workers wake. There ensues a symphony in great and exciting crescendo of the labour of millions, in towns, villages, collective-farms, settlements. Sheep are led out to pasture in the Caucasus. Hunters lay their snares in remote islands. The waking airports; those who in one day must reach distant destinations in Ashkhabad, Central Asia, Stockholm, the North Caucasus. *Pravda* and *Izvestia* are put aboard. The L70 with its passenger list of twenty-four and its crew of nine sets off for the south.

"In a block of flats, a worker, soon to be on shift, is seen with his family at breakfast. Kalinin too, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, is breakfasting with his family.

"All over the country citizens are going to work. Farmers and fishermen; girls gathering fruit in Tashkent, cotton in Uzbekistan; in the textile mills of Ivanovo, the railyards at Chelyabinsk, at a steel plant on the Amur, all the millions of builders of socialism. Among them one of whom workers in all the world know, Stalin, and with him Molotov, on the way to their offices in the Kremlin. And in the reception room of the chairman of the Soviet, in one of the new Soviet towns, an unemployed engineer is asking for work. How long were you unemployed? Five years. Five years! And now you can join at work with your new Soviet family.

"The sun rises higher and higher. It blazes on goldfield, factory, and mill; on mountain range, orchard, and vineyard. Here is a Stakhanovite woman, a deputy of the Soviet Union, at her work bench. To-day for the first time she is operating five machines simultaneously. Here is another deputy, a ballerina; she is rehearsing *Romeo and Juliet*.

"Here is far-off Wrangel Island, in the Arctic. The scientists make their observations. From north to south, from east to west, the mighty Union is alive. The ice of the Arctic gives place to the waving grain of the Central Volga regions of the Ukraine. Here a drove of agricultural machines is being towed by a single tractor, the device of the gold medallist of the Agricultural Exhibition. Here are collective-farmers building themselves a motor road over the mountains to Stalinabad.

"We are in Odessa, in the clinic of a famous professor. An operation is being performed on a collective-farm woman who has been blind for three years. The operation is successful. "Can you see?" asks the professor. "I can see everything," whispers the patient. Through the windows are the waters of the Black Sea. The shores of the Black Sea crowded with holiday makers; the beaches, the palaces, the rest homes, dark with the bronzed bodies of holiday makers from a population of 193 millions."

I am afraid this is as far as my receiving set carried me. Fading and interference, on short wave as well as long, combined to render the remainder of the broadcast nearly undecipherable. I can only report further that the sections so far related seemed to make up about two-thirds of the film, there seemed to be about a third more to come; that from the holiday makers the action seemed to lead straight to the Red Army, the forces defending the U.S.S.R.; and that "The International" forms the "play out" to the ending of the film. I think sufficient is clear, however, to make it certain that the film, on the basis of its peculiar production and construction, is likely to be of enormous interest to documentary technicians, and, in the basis of its content, to be valuably instructive to the 1,800 odd million people outside the Soviet borders.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Night Watch. A Strand film. *Production and Direction:* Donald Taylor. *Associate Director:* Ralph Bond. *Camera:* G. Noble and L. Banes. *Scripts:* Rodney Ackland and Reg Groves. M.O.I. 5 minutes.

TRAMP, TRAMP, tramp. Oh, damn, here he is again. Move on. Tramp, tramp, tramp. Let's find another corner. No use. Getting to know these feet. Darling, what about the park? No, I'm sorry, mate. Never seen so many people out at night; not a quiet corner anywhere. Not a quiet corner anywhere. The A.R.P. workers are on duty and through looking in on to a brief and simple episode in the life of a soldier and his girl, we see the background of these vital humanitarian services.

Somebody made a war, somebody is responsible for the lives of thousands of people; but amidst the emotional flux, the ruins of houses and families, are groups of men working to put right the damage which has been done. The soldier and his girl are looking for a quiet corner but the turmoil of war makes it impossible; through their conversation the director has succeeded in showing how people suffer in the small, commonplace ways, and how the A.R.P. services are constantly ready in every corner, constantly ready to meet every new danger or emergency.

Night Watch is a departure from usual documentary technique in having no commentary, the story of the film being imparted through the medium of an emotional synthesis co-ordinating the camera work, dialogue and William Alwyn's music. Some of the scenes are, perhaps, a little too obviously "studio", but the sincerity of the film over-rides this, creating an atmosphere of realism and of courage. This film is a tribute to the work being done by the A.R.P. services, and will impress more people, after having seen the performance of Anne Firth, Cyril Chamberlain and the supporting cast, than the sceptics and cynics who refute the idea of actors being able to portray the realities of life.

Rabbit Pest: *Production:* Strand Film Company for Plant Protection Limited. *Direction and Photography:* Gerald Gibbs.

TO THE TOWNSMAN the rabbit is a pretty creature and an appetising dish, and it comes as something of a shock to see a film which recommends the wholesale gassing of these animals in their burrows. The countryman will be less surprised to hear of these drastic measures because he will already be aware of the vast damage to crops which is being caused by rabbits and which is illustrated in this film. He will find it easy to believe the commentator's statement that the value of a rabbit as food—even in these days of shortage—is generally much less than the value of the crops it has destroyed during its lifetime. But the film, which is directed towards country

people, is not designed merely to confirm their awareness of the dangers of the rabbit pest, but contains admirably illustrated instruction on the most modern method of dealing with it. This is by introducing powder or sprays of poisonous dust into the burrows after all exits have been sealed with earth. By this means rabbits can be got rid of completely, and it would appear that those of us who have been wont to enjoy a little rough rabbit shooting can no longer regard it as an efficient method of protecting crops.

The film is well photographed, and Bernard Miles contributes a characteristic commentary in his warm and friendly rural accents. He finishes by reminding farmers that it is not enough for one man to clear his fields. If only a single farm is left untreated the rabbits from it it will spread back on to the lands of the good citizens. In rabbit extermination, as in everything else, co-operation is the watchword.

Winged Messengers. *Production:* G.B. Instructional. *Direction:* Mary Field. *Photography:* Frank North. M. O. I. 5 minutes.

Winged Messengers is a simple, pleasant film about the use of carrier pigeons in home defence. We're introduced to several peace-time fanciers, whose pigeons are now in uniform. In the manner of *This was England* they explain about the job of training and looking after pigeons, and there are some beautiful shots, reminiscent of *Secrets of Nature*, where a fancier spreads out, in close-up, a pigeon's wing and tail feathers to show their size and power. Carrier pigeons, it seems, are used as a stand-by in home defence where posts are liable to be surrounded or cut off from ordinary communication. They can even be trained to home to travelling wagons. The film ends with the reconstruction of an incident in an invasion, where carrier pigeons would prove invaluable.

Crisis in the Atlantic, 1941. *Production:* March of Time (No. 1, 7th Year). *Distribution:* R.K.O. Radio Pictures. 18 minutes.

IT IS PLEASANT to be able to report that *March of Time* have at last got over their war-jitters, and decided to immerse one big toe at least. *Crisis in the Atlantic, 1941*, is the story of the Atlantic convoys, with special emphasis on the increased part that the U.S.A. is playing; and in the telling of this story *March of Time* is not only making up its own mind but carefully helping American citizens to make up theirs. We have only got to look back less than a year to their *Panama* item, in which, in a complete state of panic, they were comparing combined Axis tonnage to that of the U.S.A. alone, to see how they've changed. To-day they're cheerfully comparing combined Axis tonnage with combined G.B.-U.S.A. tonnage.

That *Panama* item just about hit the low-water mark for bad shooting, bad scripting, jittery argument, lack of honesty and lack of purpose: they were in an agony of indecision. Well, the decision is taken now, and you can see it in the quality of the film. That is not to say that the old *March of Time* faults are all gone—men speaking on telephones, nameplates on doorways, people at desks, while the commentator bumbles on about something or other—but this time we have got two slap-up sequences, lively and well-shot, and they're not afraid now to string them together to mean something. The first of these sequences is the convoy, setting out from Canada, seen mainly from its escorting aircraft, then after aircraft and destroyers have turned back, life on the convoy itself—all very nicely shot. The other good sequence is on Greenland, a country I don't remember having seen on the screen before: the people with their flat, Esquimau faces, the wild island itself and, best of all, a dance when the coastguard cutters put in. Altogether a much improved *March of Time*.

A.T.S. *Production:* Army Film Unit. *Direction:* Hugh Stewart. M.O.I. 5 minutes.

WELL, WELL, WELL, who'd have thought it. After the parachute stuff in the newsreels, here comes some more good shooting from the Army Film Unit. It seems that at last the people there with experience are beginning to make their presence felt. Hugh Stewart was as experienced an editor as the British Industry had—remember *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, for instance. *A.T.S.* is a good, simple, technical job, straightforwardly illustrating the life and jobs of a volunteer, with a good deal of sync. shooting. The girls begin talking, or an instructress explaining, about the various jobs, and the film whips you off into action scenes and sync. sequences till you've pretty well gone the rounds, of the more interesting jobs. Two particularly pleasant sequences are the girls on A.A. detector work and a dance, with two (male) sergeants swinging Loch Lomond in an astonishingly lively and satisfying fashion.

The film seems to be addressed mainly to middle-class girls, and will, I am sure, be very successful in recruiting them, but it raises quite a number of other thoughts as well. I don't think it, or the *A.T.S.* for that matter, will appeal to working-class girls much. The accents, in the first place, are all very ladylike, some of them indeed almost unbearable. And then there's the question of uniform. No one can hope to persuade me that it suits more than a very small percentage of women: the rest look like rather terrifying members of another species. Of course, this, whether designedly or not I am not prepared to say, is an added attraction to middle-class women who, in general, are prone to seek satisfaction for their frustrations in various forms of exhibitionism.

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Working-class women, with their strong social modesty, watch out that any uniform they get into is pleasant and suitable—witness factory overalls and 'bus conductresses' uniforms. However, *A.T.S.* does try very laudably to put over the job in a serious and un-exhibitionist way: it is not the film's fault that the people themselves are so invincibly masterful and feminist. You feel that they are quite uncritical about it all: it is satisfaction enough for them that it is men's jobs they are doing. And over it all hangs the unmistakable aura of escape: escape from the toils of the middle-class family to the respectable haven of partial, not frightening, independence, and a safe irresponsibility that makes no real demands. I should think they'd get all the recruits they want: or are they all in the W.V.S. already? Never mind, it's a pleasant, well-made film.

Queen's Messenger. A Jay Gardner Lewis Production. Direction: J. Lewis. Associate Producer: Basil Wright. Distribution: M.O.I. 5 mins.

After the considerable criticism in the popular Press relating to the efficiency, or more exactly, the inefficiency, of the mobile canteens in servicing bombed areas, it is of interest to see a film whose object is to stress the rapidity with which these units arrive at their destination. *Queen's Messenger* is a well constructed film, but will not succeed in reassuring the sceptics that any improvement has been made. It does show the routine from the reception of a message, via ribbons of road, to the ultimate relief of the homeless as the convoy arrives. But there is no emphatic assurance that the whole operation is carried out with the speed that such an emergency necessitates. The film succeeds in being interesting, but lacking in real propagandist force.

For many people there will be an element of satisfaction in finding that services exist, and moreover, function, for the provision of food and drink for the inhabitants of bombed districts. But, although the information imparted is encouraging, one would like an assurance that relief can be available within hours, and not days, as has been the case in the past. There is an insistent demand that action shall be rapid and effective—not the pathetic fumbblings of a Gerontocracy. In the familiarity of the opening sequence, showing the aged group in the pub., there was a hint of cliché, relieved only by the cheerful pessimism of the assembled characters.

Learning to Live. Production: Merton Park Studios, for the British Council. Direction: Harold Purcell. Camera: James Rogers.

THIS is a well-made and extremely well photographed film, and is designed to give a general impression of the operations of our State Educational system. A family of three children is shown, one child being at the infant stage, and the others at primary and secondary stages respectively. In its material the film differs in no great detail from others dealing with the same subject; but the violently propagandist commentary is quite a surprise in a British Council film which, according to its sponsors, should be anything but propaganda. The tone of the com-

mentary may be gauged by the astonishing remark to the effect that "every British child, regardless of class or income, carries a University degree in its satchel". Both the director and the sponsors were presumably aware that, although theoretically correct, this remark falls so far short of fact as to be something like a taradiddle—a point which will be sharply noted by friends abroad who have seen British documentaries dealing more elaborately with Britain's plans for improving and democratising her educational system. But, apart from the whole tone

of the commentary, the film is, as has been said, pleasant to look upon.

The question, however, arises as to how far pleasant pictures (and these are particularly pleasant) of children at work and play in good surroundings can represent much more than a titivation of the audience's sentimental senses. There is nothing wrong in that; but in presenting such films as a "mirror held up to the face of Britain" one may question whether the British Council is doing even a "cultural", as opposed to a "propagandist" job.

REPORT FROM A MINING VILLAGE

M.O.I. Films in Scotland

WHEN the Films Division of the M.O.I. release one of their five-minute films what further interest do they take in it? Do they collect comments on it and consider the reviews? Are reports received systematically from the cinemas? Is there a dossier of private and published opinion on each of the films, which may be consulted when policy is being discussed and new production embarked upon?

I imagine that there are affirmatives for most of these questions. Propaganda is a science and cannot be run on haphazard methods. It would be surprising if mistakes were repeated and the lessons of the early films went unlearned. The directors probably see their films when first released in one or two cinemas in London's West End; but they would be merely repeating the mistake of the commercial film makers if they attached exaggerated importance to that special and narrow verdict. If they had time they would find it instructive to be present when their films are shown in some of the less well-beaten cinema tracks.

Consider, for example, the reception given to M.O.I. films in one of the mining villages in Scotland. The following comments are from the report of a M.O.I. driver-projectionist who gives shows to miners in village welfare halls.

"I do not think the miners see themselves as a part of the war effort. They have lived too near to pits all their lives to see them as anything other than just pits. I could not show them *Feed the Furnaces* as I know that 2,000 tons of scrap is known to be lying at the bottom of one pit and they believe that there are thousands of tons in other pits nearby.

"A film like *Dawn Guard* leaves them with the idea that someone is trying to put something over on them. The dialogue in the film—'The truth is we are much too lazy. We left it to other people to think instead of thinking for ourselves'—seems to them a very insincere criticism coming from a Government film. I was surprised at the reaction to this film. They immediately place it as insincere propaganda, and feel that someone is trying to fool them.

"*Britain Can Take It* was by far the most successful film. The reasons, I think, were because of the neutral reporter, the emphasis on the

common people and the fact that it showed what the war was like. In films, they want to see the war, not hear speeches delivered with pictures about *Feed the Furnaces*, when they know that scrap is not being used; or Home Guards delivering in an almost unintelligible accent, as foreign to them as Greek, a criticism of Government by the Government. They are much too canny for methods of film making which might be successful in the south.

"How many people observed that when in *The Owner Goes Aboard* Mr. Smith boarded a British man-of-war, he was shown round without producing his identity card; and that the W.V.S. lady in *Heart of Britain* says: 'There in the pitch darkness of the night . . . seeing men bringing out bodies . . . I did not notice these things. The Fife miners did.

"A film like *Yellow Caesar* leaves them unimpressed, as they have had all these views for a long time—but were 'reds' if they expressed them. They cannot feel that these things are sincere in a film of this nature. As I have been told time and time again: 'They did not show us that sort of thing when Spain was on the go . . . Naw we were aw pals then.' 'Hitler! We were fightin' him when the big bugs were givin' him the money tae bomb us tae hell.' 'The Negus is back . . . but he wisny worth botherin' aboot afore' and so on. These are actual remarks from the best type of miner. Although they hold these views they are behind the war effort, and refer to the few I have met who are not, as 'bloody reds!' . . ."

The general experience of this and other projectionists who show films in rural areas in Scotland is that there is more interest in factual than in vague theoretical themes. Audiences want to see films of real events—*Britain Can Take It*, *Lofoten*. They are acutely aware of the contrast between the state of affairs visualised in such films as *Dawn Guard* and the hard facts of their actual conditions. They do not believe, in the words of more than one miner, that this will be a land fit for heroes after the war is finished. Too many of them fought in the last war. Their reactions give a measure of the job which awaits forward-looking propaganda.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MONTHLY SIXPENCE

VOL. 2 NUMBER 7
JULY 1941

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER is issued only to private subscribers and continues the policy and purpose of *World Film News* by expressing the documentary idea towards everyday living.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER is produced under the auspices of Film Centre, London, in association with American Film Center, New York.

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We are prepared to deliver from 3—50 copies in bulk to Schools, Film Societies and other organisations.

Owned and published by

FILM CENTRE LTD.
34 SOHO SQUARE LONDON

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GERRARD 4253

THE SCIENTIFIC FILM

A memorandum published by the Scientific Films Committee of The Association of Scientific Workers

THE FILM is the most compelling medium for explaining facts (instruction) and for showing new relationships between known facts (interpretation). The film presents reality in a readily received form, because, especially with the help of sound, it can concentrate audience attention to the fullest. It can be screened in many places, a large number of times. The film can also take its audience to any place or object and show relations difficult to convey otherwise; it can give to the space and time dimensions whatever values are best for the particular kind of exposition in hand. Further, the film can pick out the essential items of a process, and range over the field to give an integrated view. Where a dynamic process needs to be illustrated or taught, the moving film is essential; no black-board diagram, no lantern slide can take its place adequately. Books, newspapers, radio, and the theatre each have some but not all of these qualities.

The film can teach the facts and methods of science in an easily acceptable way and to the best effect. Many films by no means develop these possibilities. If the film is to be used effectively as a medium for exposition, the way it works must be understood.

First, the film is, and cannot be other than pictures in motion. Therefore, the film must express its ideas through motion. Unless there is movement, either of the picture on the screen, or by cutting from one shot to another as the idea of the film is developed, the eye and mind become tired and attention flags. One may think it ought not to flag if the subject is interesting; but the fact remains that attention is lost unless the treatment of the subject is interesting.

The film must show what it is discussing. This is obvious though it is often forgotten. A process or experiment cannot be shown in mid-shot only; a close shot of every relevant detail is necessary. Mid-shot or long shot may be needed to relate the details to the whole. Contiguous details may be linked by moving the camera from one to the other (panning). The point of view of the camera must be carefully selected to show just what is wanted, clearly, without irrelevant intrusions. This means simply that good photography and careful lighting is not an artist's luxury but a necessity for good exposition.

The film must refer by title or commentary, with the utmost clarity, to what is on the screen, when this is not self-evident. Titles and commentary must be lucid, sparing of words and easy to read or hear. They must call a spade a spade, and that when the spade is on the screen.

Most important is a unified theme. The film must be in one piece, coherent. It must also be even in treatment, and must not cover one section in elementary detail and another section of the same category only in brief outline.

The technique of many of the scientific films viewed by the Scientific Films Committee is bad because they do not follow these principles.

RANGE OF TREATMENT

Certain special techniques of the film technician are possible in a scientific film. Some of them can be particularly useful in making research films.

- (a) Speeded up or slowed down motion, e.g. examination of cloud movement, plant growth, and forms of airflow.
- (b) Enlargement or reduction of dimensions.
- (c) Diagrammatic explanation of phenomena not normally visible.
- (d) Increase of the colour range by a shifting of the spectrum. This, as far as we know, has not yet been used in film work.
- (e) Reversal of processes.
- (f) Superimposition or split screen work.
- (g) Stroboscopic technique. (The cine camera does its own "stroboscoping", i.e., a high speed cyclic movement, when seen intermittently, as the cine-camera sees it, becomes visible as it is slowed down.)

The script and the production of the film should be in the hands of a competent film producer rather than in those of the specialist whose subject is being translated into film terms.

The specialist advises the producer; it is not the other way round. Being a specialist in his own science it is not to be expected that he is a specialist also in film presentation. At the same time, the film producer should have a scientific outlook and a good knowledge of the subject being portrayed.

CATEGORIES OF SCIENTIFIC FILMS

While there are many ways in which scientific films can be classified, we find it useful to consider them in three categories: instructional, interpretive, and research. It is obvious that there will be overlap between these categories, and that any one film may fall into more than one category. From the practical standpoint, however, of building up a programme or choosing a single film for a particular purpose, the Scientific Films Committee has found this classification very useful. Here we are concerned mainly with interpretive and adult instructional films. School teaching films are adequately dealt with elsewhere; we especially recommend the publications of the British Film Institute (which was formed as the result of a conference called by the A.S.W. in 1929), and the book, "The Film and Radio as Educational Media," by J. A. Lauwerys.

The instructional film presents facts to people of all ages. The most important aim is to portray general principles of science, the so-called laws of nature. Instructional films should be used to

educate the adult public in the things it has not learnt at school or in spheres of activity which have only lately come into being. Films can help to clear away many widely held fallacious ideas.

Some films show solely how a particular process or method is carried out, without explaining the scientific principles underlying it. These how-to-do-it films may be termed "manipulative."

The interpretive film goes beyond the instructional film which only gives facts and principles. The interpretive film expounds these in such a way as to give them a wider significance, especially in their social context. It is essentially a documentary film in which the scientific approach is the controlling motive. The interpretive film aims to show the individual his place in the complex scientific world of today, and explain his relations with his fellow-men. It integrates science and society.

An example will show more clearly what we mean by an interpretive film as distinct from an instructional film:—An instructional film on electric illumination would show the different methods available—carbon and metallic filaments, carbon arc lighting, and lighting by neon, sodium and mercury-vapour lamps. It would show the advantages and disadvantages and the methods of use of each type. It might touch on their historical development. An interpretive film would show the effect of these inventions on the way we live, and how they have produced new kinds of social activity. The ordinary electric lamp has made domestic life by night as comfortable as by day; the carbon arc has made the cinema possible. Better illumination on the highway, in city streets and in factories has brought new conditions of work, travel and pleasure. Completely new industries have arisen.

It is easy to forget the incredibly complex background to our daily lives, but important not to, and the interpretive film serves to foster an understanding of that background. For example, to enable the ordinary city worker to travel from the outskirts to the centre of London every morning, a band of men and women drivers, maintenance and clerical staff, and managers are needed to run the complicated machine of modern transport.

Democracy is essential for the maintenance of a full scientific tradition. The interpretive film is an important product of democratic thinking when it assumes that the individual is important, and that he is intelligent enough to be interested in the world about him. The most stimulating of such films are made by people who think of their audience in these terms. The interpretive film can not only help fashion a democracy, but can portray democracy. It can show an individual leading a full life in open-eyed co-operation with others. In this sense the interpretive film can be a very valuable export to other countries.

There are films used by the scientist as an instrument of experiment, like a stop watch or a stroboscope. The value of the film used in this way is that it can bring data, which would normally be outside it, into the range of visual observation. What research films are made will depend on what research work is being done and on the

facilities available. A film made for research purposes can be made into an instructional film with care in planning its production, e.g. instructional films on the study of airflow, and the growth of the tomato virus in plant cells were evolved in this way. This last point is not kept in mind sufficiently when planning research work.

MAKING SCIENTIFIC FILMS KNOWN

The British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, W.C.1, prepares catalogues of teaching films, including scientific films, and will give help to schools and educational authorities on the obtaining of such films either from its own library or from other libraries; and also on the availability of projectors, etc. It has published a number of pamphlets dealing with the teaching film. Its monthly bulletin (price 6d.) gives reviews of films seen by its viewing panels.

The Scientific Films Committee of the Association of Scientific Workers issues a list of scientific films viewed and appraised (price 1s. 8d. postage included) and will provide critical reviews to affiliated bodies. The list issued by the S.F.C. deals mainly with films suitable for adult education and for showing to general audiences, and contains only films considered to come up to an adequate standard.

Among libraries which deal only with educational documentaries are: The Central Film Library, British Commercial Gas Association, Petroleum Films Bureau. Other distributors from whom scientific films among other shorts can be obtained are the National Film Library, Educational and General Services Ltd., Gaumont British Instructional, British Instructional Films.

While scientific documentary films are sometimes included in the programmes of the public cinemas, the general public has little opportunity of seeing such films. The B.F.I. is pressing for the extended use of the cinema in schools. The adult population is catered for by a limited number of film societies and clubs. Outstanding among the latter are the London Scientific Film Society (founded 1939), the Aberdeen Scientific Film Club and the Glasgow Scientific Film Society (1940). Other film societies are now including more and more scientific films in their programmes.

Many scientific organisations and college societies hold occasional film shows, branches of the Association of Scientific Workers in various provincial centres hold shows open to the public.

Recently A.R.P. authorities and units of the Forces have initiated film shows for their members. As these entertainments, in spite of their high value, obtain very little financial support—if any—the difficulties of obtaining films are great. Usually 16mm. silent projectors are used and the films are begged or borrowed. It is to be hoped that this fine educational activity, usually started by some keen individual, will receive more support in the future.

EXTENSION OF PRESENT FACILITIES

Those who feel that the standard of scientific education should be raised can work towards that aim if they make the fullest possible use of the present facilities as outlined above. It will re-

mind the makers and distributors of good films that their work is valuable and needed; it will lead to the full development of the scientific film as this depends on its being used as widely as possible. It is only recently that organised criticisms have been available to the producers. If these film productions are constructively criticised by those who use them, their makers can go on to improve still further the qualities of their films.

The present time is in many ways ideal for the spread of information of the facts of our world and for making people conscious of science by means of films. The old groups of the community have been broken up and reformed into Army, Navy, Air Force, factory, A.R.P. and other groups. Thousands of men and women have had the means for their former leisure occupations taken away from them. They sometimes find time on their hands, and do not know how to use it. At the same time as they are puzzled and bewildered, they are anxious to find sense and order in a rapidly changing world. Everywhere that films have been shown to such audiences the people have been stimulated and have asked for more film shows.

Every person in charge of groups in the armed forces and factories, in charge of A.R.P., ambulance, fire fighter, or land worker groups, or helping to run social clubs, village institutes and the new communities growing in some of the large air raid shelters, should consider whether films cannot play a part in giving relaxation and opportunity for mental development.

Those able to run shows on a large scale should try to get films from other countries as well. The supply of films from U.S.A., U.S.S.R., South Africa, and Australia is almost untapped. The S.F.C. can put inquirers into touch with the appropriate bodies for getting such films. This will do much to spur on production of good quality scientific films in those countries, at the same time as it widens our own educational facilities.

Ideas for film subjects and ways of using available films often occur to people who show them. They sometimes feel that they would like to make their suggestions in some quarter where they would have some effect. The S.F.C. would be most glad to receive such suggestions, and would pass them on to the appropriate people. The Committee feel, in particular, that our large national institutions should be encouraged to publicise their work by means of films. One aim of this memorandum has been to get this very important work done. People at home and abroad should know of our social achievements. In the past, some of our scientific institutions have sponsored the production of films about their work—but, although the people who made the films were eager enough, they were often regrettably uninformed about the principles of film construction. The results must have been discouraging to their producers, who, we hope, will be stimulated again to more enlightened efforts. If they are not to be a waste of money, films must be well made by people who know something about them.

(continued on p. 133)

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Prophecy, Progress & Policy

EVER since the days of the Magic Lantern the *Kinematograph Weekly* has kept its readers abreast with the continuous advance—technical, artistic and distributive, of the picture industry.

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WEEKLY

93 LONG ACRE LONDON W.C.2

(continued from p. 131)

Everybody who makes films or who wants to have films made must bear in mind the importance and potential value of his work to society. The S.F.C. will welcome all suggestions for new films to be made and will pass them on to quarters where the most use will be made of them. There may be difficulties in the way of their production in war time, but that need not be a bar to their production when war is over. Let us have suggestions for film production plans for the future. We must have as many ideas as possible on tap, ready for the day on which we must start rebuilding the chaos, both in culture and in bricks and stones, that now lies around us. That work of creation will be fully as difficult and character testing as the present contest in destruction. Films will be able to play a vital part in that work.

FILMS WHICH SHOULD BE MADE

(a) Instructional

It is to be noted that instructional films on botany and zoology have had a great appeal (under the guise of "Secrets of Nature" or "Zoo" films). Other subjects could have a similar success if treated in a realistic informative fashion, especially if linked with a human appeal. Important advances in education could be made if more films were available explaining scientific fundamentals. The facts of science must principally be learned by personal experiment and from text books, but the film can give inspiration and foster the scientific approach to all the problems of everyday life. The film is often used by teachers in schools to awaken interest and enthusiasm when introducing a new subject to a class. If film producers and the writers of scientific books worked together, a great deal could be attained for both child and adult education.

For distribution both in the schools and the public cinemas, it is not so much individual subjects or departments of scientific knowledge which need to be portrayed as the illustration of the essentials, spirit, attitudes, ideals, and general method of scientific work.

Biographies of Pasteur, Edison, and Ehrlich as full-length feature films (all American productions) have been released in England and, in general, showed a high level of scientific understanding. But there have not been any film biographies of the documentary type available in England, although the Committee understands that some have been sponsored in America. There are no film biographies of any British scientists. The Scientific Films Committee suggests that some of the learned societies and chartered institutions would do valuable work if they were to sponsor films of this type, both for home showing and for export. Some suggestions for both types of films are given below:

General Principles of Science:—The conservation of matter and energy; the second law of thermodynamics; Newton's laws; the principles of evolution; atomic constitution.

Lives of the Great Scientists:—The Lunar Society, Roger Bacon and his scientific prophecies; Priestley and his support of the French Revolution; Newton and the culmina-

tion of the early British scientific tradition; Davy and his applied chemistry; Smeaton and the building of the Eddystone lighthouse; Arkwright and the industrial riots; Lister and his differences with his contemporaries; Huxley and the gradual acceptance of the theory of evolution; Kelvin and the laying of the Atlantic cable; Ross and the discovery of the cause of malaria; Rutherford and atom smashing.

(b) Interpretive

There are many gaps in the range of interpretive films due to the subjects having been treated in bad films only or not treated at all. In the field of Biology, for example, there are many good foreground films, but there is need for interpretive films within the subject, e.g. the function of the lung and modification of the lung in different animals. Even subjects such as mathematics and astronomy have grown up in a social context and have their reactions on society.

The range of possible films showing the effect of science on industrial technique, on the lives of the people and forecasting future development, is very wide. Only a few typical suggestions are given below.

New Inventions and Discoveries and their effect on Industry and Society:—Electric lighting (filament lamp and others); X-rays

and discoveries of atomic structure; thermionic valves; photo-electric cell and automatic control; plastics; synthetic textiles; synthetic chemicals; vitamins and hormones; light metal alloys; air-conditioning plant; hydroponics.

A New Approach to Relations between Science and Society:—The introduction of the flint implement; communications and transport; the distribution and storage of power; bacteria in the service of man; animal breeding and selection; the history of the reaper; the theory of fertilisers and rotation of crops; the fight against disease—cancer, tuberculosis and heart disease; the ideal house; how we get pure water; drains and dustbins; the cinema. Science has been blamed for upsetting the world. This is the fault of governments for not understanding the new facts and their history, of scientists for not working to present science in an easily understandable and palatable form, and of people generally for not demanding a full explanation. The scientific film is a medium for the presentation of the facts and results of science. It can, therefore, lead to a better understanding of the forces on which civilisation is based.

Reprints of this memorandum can be obtained on sending cost of postage to the Scientific Films Committee, Association of Scientific Workers, 30 Bedford Row, London, W.C.1.

REPRODUCING A PLAY

Reprinted from the *National Board of Review Magazine*

With the excellent purpose of broadening the audience of the acted play, a company called Theatre-on-Film is now engaged in making talking movies of selected Broadway plays. Made on 16 mm. film, the pictures will not be shown in the usual commercially operated motion picture theatres but will be released for the use of churches, schools, colleges and similar educational organisations interested in the theatre but prevented by their location or finances from attending stage productions.

The first film on this new programme is Maxwell Anderson's play on an episode in the early life of Jesus, called *Journey to Jerusalem*, produced in New York last year. The movie presents the play uncut and with its original cast and settings. "Theatre-on-Film" is a more accurate term than "movie", for only in the sense that the drama is projected on a screen and that close-ups are employed can it be called a "movie". Actually the camera functions in almost precisely the same way as the eyes of someone sitting in a good seat in the audience. After the essential programme data about the people concerned in the performance, a title describes the first scene, the actual picture begins with a curtain rising, and the play starts. At each scene's close the curtain is lowered and a title giving the next scene appears, just as though you had consulted your programme. It is a photographed play in the literal sense and makes no pretence of being

cinematic. The settings are stage settings, the actors move and declaim in the fashion of the stage and, with the exception of the close-up, the camera is static and the action of each section is restricted to the limits of the stage. At first all this is likely to appear rather stilted to eyes accustomed to expect extreme realism and mobile photography on the screen, but the spectator becomes adjusted to it in a surprisingly short time.

Mr. Anderson's ambitious work would be relegated to the library shelf but for this interesting attempt to restore to it a play's only true life: performance before an audience. Aside from extending the pleasures of the theatre to people who can't have them at first hand, Theatre-on-Film provides an excellent way to see plays; in fact, with the addition of colour *Journey to Jerusalem* would be perfect theatre in the physical sense, transferred bodily to a screen which you can see better, and from which you can hear better, than is usually possible in the playhouse itself, and you have the comfort of saving all the time taken up in scene-shifting between acts.

If Theatre-on-Film can go on from its promising beginning, it can preserve and extend the life of many fine plays in their original form, plays lacking in the qualities that invite cinematic reproduction in the commercial studios but, as a special part of our literature, worthy of something more than the occasional attention of the drama student in a library.

5-MINUTE FILMS FOR APRIL, MAY AND JUNE

There were no releases on April 21st, May 26th or June 2nd

<i>Title</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Production Unit</i>	<i>Released</i>
Ack-Ack	Anti-aircraft gunnery	Peter Baylis	Shell Film Unit	April 7, 1941
Mobile Canteen	Feeding out in the Blitz	Jay Lewis	Verity	April 14, 1941
Words for Battle	Words and pictures	Humphrey Jennings	Crown	April 28, 1941
Home Guard	The defence of Britain	Donald Taylor and Ivan Moffat	Strand	May 5, 1941
Eating Out With Tommy Trinder	British Restaurants	Desmond Dickinson	Strand	May 12, 1941
A Visit from Canada	Billeting Canadian Soldiers	John Taylor	Realist	May 19, 1941
Winged Messengers	Carrier pigeons	Mary Field	G.-B.I.	June 9, 1941
A.T.S.	Women in the Army	—	Army Film Unit	June 16, 1941
Citizens Advice Bureau	Help in need	Francis Searle	G.-B. Screen Services	June 23, 1941
Air Woman	Women in the Air Force	Francis Searle	G.-B. Screen Services	June 30, 1941

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TWO FILMS OF THE MONTH

I WANTED WINGS—WESTERN UNION

NOWADAYS REALISM is the thing. Particularly from Hollywood are coming many films set against a factual background, and the tendency to separate film characters from the economic and sociological consequences of their environments appears to be less pronounced. It is a development which the documentary film-maker obviously must welcome. For many years the documentary movement has been singing the praises of the realistic theme for story films, and even when realism is kept strictly in the background of the story, the very idea of setting the fictional plot amongst the facts of life is a step in what documentary has always felt to be the right direction. Unfortunately the most recent developments seem to suggest that it is not quite so simple as all that.

There is an increasing tendency to cash in on the growing demand for realistic films with productions which are genuinely realist neither in story nor in background. The superficial and publicised appeal is to the public appetite for fact, but these films actually consist of the old familiar improbabilities strung together in a bad imitation of the modern realistic fashion.

This month's examples of this kind of film are *I Wanted Wings* and *Western Union*. *I Wanted Wings* is supposed to be about the American Army Air Corps and how it is being trained. In point of fact, almost no accurate information is given on this subject. The film proves to be a story of three variegated young Americans, and their spurious emotional reactions to the idea of flying plus their conventional Hollywood reactions to the idea of women. Yet this film is being ballyhooed around the town as if for the first time the public was to be given an insight into the power and methods of operation of the U.S. Air Force. It is true that in the film there are scenes of training. They run for four or five seconds each and are combined into an impressionistic montage sequence full of double exposures. It is, accordingly, impossible to see exactly what is going on. There is a sequence supposed to depict a night air raid exercise over Los Angeles. The bombers come over in the darkness wing-tip to wing-tip at an altitude which is reported by a hysterical radio commentator as 15,000 feet. Judging from the pictures themselves the altitude is not more than 1,500 feet, and the bombers are clearly visible whether illuminated by the searchlights or not. This is fortunate because it enables the public to watch every detail of the night raid from beginning to end, including the combats between fighters and bombers. It is no wonder that this sequence was greeted with roars of laughter, even by a polite première audience.

This film does not even content itself with the

claim to be an epic of the air, but undertakes the additional task of introducing, with the usual fanfares, a new star known as the Blonde Bomber. The authenticity of the film is such that when in the final sequences this young woman hides herself aboard a Flying Fortress in order to escape from the police, no one can feel the slightest surprise.

Western Union is a much better film. It is, in fact, a perfectly adequate western in Technicolor with gun duels, a forest fire and a measure of comedy. Yet, from its title, and from advance publicity, one was led to believe that it proposed to present the story of the Western Union Telegraph Company. (Surely one of the most exciting film subjects that exists.) Moreover, it was

directed by Fritz Lang, who may normally be counted upon for something unusual. Yet this film might just as well have been about gold-mining, stock raising, or wheat farming as about telegraphy. It differs in no important particular from the traditional horse-opera and would have been acceptable as such were it not for the pretension of dealing with such an important American institution as Western Union.

It is clear from a viewing of these two films that the pseudo-realistic story background represents a step backward from the type of film which tried to present a good exciting story and nothing more. It is no use wrapping up old melodramas in to-day's newspaper and pretending to serve caviare instead of fish and chips.

FILM SOCIETY NEWS

THE season is now virtually at an end, and news from societies trickles in only sporadically. It is gratifying to look back over the winter and to realise with what energy the societies kept going despite the difficulties of blitz weather, and transport. Our reports are that nearly all societies expect to continue next autumn. In the meantime, news of only one Summer School has so far been received, particulars of which will be found below.

On account of the unqualified success of the first **Workers Film School** last year, many requests have been made for the School to be held annually.

The **Workers Film Association Limited**, in association with the Association of Cine Technicians, have considered these requests and have decided to invite democratic bodies to be represented at a **Second Workers Film School**, to be held during the period **FRIDAY, 18th JULY, to MONDAY, 21st JULY, 1941, inclusive**.

Owing to the good services of the Trades Union Congress, the use of Holywell Manor, Oxford, has been obtained.

The school will serve two main purposes. Firstly, to give technical assistance to those who are responsible for the organisation of Film Exhibitions, and secondly, to assist those interested in the production of 16 mm. films for exhibition to working class audiences.

Education Committees of Co-operative Societies, Local Labour Parties, Trade Union Branches and other democratic organisations have been invited to appoint representatives to attend the School. One big advantage of Holywell Manor is that students will be accommodated in one building for lectures, meals and residence, thus ensuring complete school life, which is so desirable.

An inclusive fee of 16s. per day will include full board residence and lecture fees. Students may book for one, two or three days.

The programme of the school includes an opening address by Arthur Greenwood, lectures on "Organisation of Projection Units"; "Producing a Social Film"; "Films which have influenced Public Opinion"; "Preparing a Script"; "Trades

Unionism and the Film Technician"; "Programme Building"; and "Films for Natives". Lectures will also be given on the technical aspects of 16 mm. camerawork and projection, and there will be a number of film shows.

The speakers include Walter Greenwood, Ralph Bond, George Elvin, Sydney Box, Alderman Joseph Reeves, W. Sellars and G. Ridley, M.P.

At the final meeting of the Glasgow Branch of the **Scottish Churches Film Guild** three films were reviewed—*The Prodigal Son*, *The Light of the World* and *Blind Bartimeus*. The first is a modern version of the old story and suitable for Religious work in Missions. *The Light of the World* is fundamentally good, although a short explanation should be given if it is shown to children over twelve years of age. Thunder and lightning effects are included in this picture. The final picture reviewed was considered satisfactory and suitable for all ages. The last two pictures are short reels.

The next meeting of the Glasgow Branch of the Guild will be held in September when the reviews will be continued. Any of our Glasgow readers who are interested should communicate with the Honorary Secretary, Mr. Alex. M. Brown, 23 Struan Gardens, Cathcart, Glasgow, S.4, who will forward full particulars of the meetings and reviews when the arrangements for the coming winter are made.

The secretary of the **Glasgow Scientific Film Society** writes: "There has been a lull during the summer months, but the production unit is meeting quite frequently, and the film on blood transfusion is almost completed. We feel sure that this film will cause quite a lot of interest amongst amateur film lovers, apart from its topical and instructive interest.

"In a few weeks' time plans for the Annual General Meeting will be made. Arrangements will also be made then for the coming winter's programme, when we hope to be able to present to our members films of scientific and topical interest in the same way that was so well received last season."

CORRESPONDENCE.

ELSTREE

SIR: In regard to the article, "Art and the Art Director" (DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER, May, 1941), your correspondent's views on the "bad old days of B.I.P." are based on an evidently brief experience at the studios which ended as early as December, 1928. That was only the very beginning; the studios were hardly getting into their stride. Certainly, some of the earliest efforts lacked ambition and imagination (even so, there was Hitchcock's *The Ring*), but few English films did not, in those days. The point is that Elstree was, in fact, the very cradle of the new English film industry—and most of the men to whom your correspondent refers with proper admiration, worked within its walls, and there developed their technique.

Alfred Junge was not just a "bright spot"—he was designer of a number of films of "the bad old Elstree days" including perhaps the last of the "great" silent films, Robison's *Informer*, with Lars Hansen and Lya de Putti.

Norman Arnold, David Rawnsley, Duncan Sutherland, to quote a few other names mentioned in your article, were all in their various times regularly on the pay-roll. To-day, whether it is directors, writers, art directors or cutters—a large proportion of key and leading craftsmen at all the studios will be found to have graduated at Elstree.

Mr. Rotha says the studios closed a few weeks after he left—not because of that, apparently—but "because sound was on its way across the Atlantic". The studios never closed. *Blackmail*, an excellent silent Hitchcock film, was simultaneously converted into the first British talkie—a brilliant achievement, marking out its director genius for the world honours he has lately won in Hollywood.

Elstree, in these same bad days, was making the first bi- and tri-lingual films; it made the first Shaw films (too soon); it made the first opera film (a misfire, but the will to break new ground was there). It may be true that towards the end (as it proved to be) a more strictly commercial policy was pursued—but, even so, it was still possible to maintain standards while marking time, as it were.

It was only a few weeks after the studio closed upon the outbreak of war and Government requisitioning in Autumn, 1939, that I received the following letter from the (now) Minister of State, Lord Beaverbrook:

"I have seen your film, *Poison Pen*. It is a magnificent production. You have done brilliantly and you deserve immense praise. That sort of film lifts up the industry in Britain to heights transcending Hollywood—and Paris, too, for that matter." [6th November, 1939.]

I shall be grateful if you can publish these few notes. To say the least, it is no more than is due to the memory of John Maxwell, creator of the Corporation, and to whose initiative and con-

structiveness in the sphere of English films, so many people owe so much.

Yours, etc.,

Hilltop,

Deacon's Hill, Elstree.

WALTER C. MYCROFT

THE FUTURE OF SHORTS

SIR: I think most people—I'm certain most intelligent people—would rather see a newsreel followed by two or three good shorts and a single feature, than a newsreel and a double feature programme.

In the case of a double feature programme, the second feature is either inferior to the big picture, as good as the big picture, or better than the big picture. If it's inferior, then it spoils the programme, if it's good, then (in the majority of cases) it "quarrels" with the big picture; while if it is better, then obviously the "B.P." has been carelessly booked, and the programme would have been better without it. Very rarely can two feature films be found which are complementary to one another—which could, in fact, make an ideal double feature programme. There seems little doubt anyway that a newsreel, two or three shorts, and one feature, form the best programme. The short, therefore, pulls its weight and is a necessary part of the programme—since few would relish a newsreel and single feature only.

This being so, it is patent that the financial position of the short film is at once false and unfair: the best shorts made command only a few pounds, and often only a few shillings, while a feature can collect anything up to 50 per cent of the takings.

I'm tired of hearing people tell me that they'd

rather see a bunch of good shorts than the average big picture—the popularity of the Newsreel Theatres proves this anyway. Recently, a sound recordist (of feature pictures) told me that both he and his wife would rather see a "blank blank" (mentioning a well-known series of shorts) than any feature yet made. A continually growing body of people would rather be stimulated than merely drugged. One possible answer is that the average feature is not fulfilling its function. But, even if it were, it would be on scarcely more than an equal footing with the good short, for shorts would still be a necessary part of the programme.

In all my recent visits to the cinema it has been the shorts which have received the hand. However, it may well be that wartime subjects arouse a patriotic response which would be absent in peacetime, though most certainly not if shorts were to continue the practice of dealing with subjects vital to the community at large—and this is the avowed policy of documentary.

Government sponsoring has brought the shorts producer into his own for the first time since the death of the slapstick comedy—and the fact that a well-made short costs more than it can recoup is (while sponsoring continues) no longer a millstone around the producer's neck. But after the war—or shall I say when sponsoring ceases—the position will be as black as it was in pre-war days, and the survival of the well-made short will, once again, depend upon the publicly minded advertiser—which is but another form of sponsoring.

This prospect is deplorable—for producer and public alike—yet we can scarcely expect altruism from the distributor and exhibitor. It is up to the shorts producers to band together and fight for fair prices, achieving them by legislation if necessary. A public outcry for good shorts—were the public to wake up and shout at all—would be useless, for they would soon be forthcoming from America at the old price.

(Technical Note.—Observe the static shots of old prints in the montage showing the threat of war New, ingenious, and perfectly in character.)

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Unless the shorts producer is prepared to go out of business, and relinquish belief in his function, it is up to him to prepare now a plan that will ensure a fair price for his product, for the time when sponsorship, as now enjoyed, will no longer exist.

Yours, etc.,

Ashenden,
Bradmore Way, Brookmans Park,
Hatfield, Herts.

DARREL CATLING

FILMS IN THE ARMY

STR; Having just been invalided out of the Army after 20 months in uniform, I was naturally very interested in your article, "Training Films" (*D.N.L.* June)

I would not dispute that such films are being made. I should certainly not dispute their great value, if and when they are made. But I would like to ask, "How often are they shown?" For during the whole time I was in the army I never saw a single military film! In spite of the fact that I served with G.H.Q. France and with a training establishment in this country, I never so much as heard of such a film until January, 1941. As for seeing these films, my service with two corps, R.E. and R.A.S.C. never brought me even the smell of a film. If I wanted to see battledress on celluloid I had to go to the local "flicks," and your readers will know just how much "tactics" can be learnt from a doctored newsreel! For Pete's sake, bring out the training films and let the troops see them!

Yours, etc.

Louth, Lincs.

WILLIAM E. DICK

FILM DISCUSSION GUIDES

News comes from U.S.A. that four unique movie discussion guides have been published by the American Association for Adult Education (60 E. 42nd Street, N.Y.C.). Each guide is written especially to accompany the showing of a specific film or group of films. "China's War and the U.S.A." is based on the films, *China Strikes Back* and *Japan's War in China*; "Planning for Living" on *The City*; "Unemployment and Defense" on *Valley Town*; and "What Shall we Defend" on a group of five films. The guides review the content of the films, analyse the issues raised, provide questions and give suggestions to leaders for forum discussions. Other films and reading references on the subjects are listed.

Publication of the guides follows participation by the Association in the development of the Film Forum Committee which staged a series of experimental film forums last winter in several New York public libraries. The Association contributed the leaders' outlines issued by that committee, and also held a series of experimental film forums under its own auspices, on the basis of which the guides were prepared.

SHORT FILM BOOKINGS FOR JULY 1941

(The following bookings for July are selected from a list covering its Members, supplied by The News and Specialised Theatres Association)

	Week ending		Week ending
A Job to be Done		Nature's Nursery	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	July 19th	The News Theatre, Bristol	2nd
Alex in Wonderland		Non-jural	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	26th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	July 26th
Alice in Movieland		Officer Dock	
The News Theatre, Bristol	12th	The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	19th
The Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham	Aug. 2nd	Palms and Pagodas	
Arrow Points		The News Theatre, Birmingham	19th
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	2nd	Pheasant Dock	
Atlantic		The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	19th
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	July 12th	Plenty of Money and You	
At the Circus		The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	26th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	26th	Ruins of Palmyra	
A Way in the Wilderness		The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	Aug. 2nd
The News Theatre, Leeds	12th	Savoy in the Alps	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	19th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	July 26th
The Tatler Theatre, Chester	19th	Scottish Symphony	
Beautiful British Columbia		The News Theatre, Leeds	26th
The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	12th	Screen Snapshots, No. 88	
Cities of North Africa		The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	19th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Aug. 2nd	Screen Snapshots, No. 90	
Congo Mania		The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	Aug. 2nd
The News Theatre, Bristol	July 19th	Sea for Yourself	
Damascus and Jerusalem		The News Theatre, Birmingham	2nd
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	26th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	2nd
Devils of the Ocean		Seen in Bali	
The News Theatre, Nottingham	12th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	2nd
Disney Cartoon		Ship Shape	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	12th	The News Theatre Newcastle-on-Tyne	July 19th
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	19th	Singapore and Jahore	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	26th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	26th
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Aug. 2nd	Sioux Me	
Drafted in the Depot		The News Theatre, Leeds	12th
The Tatler Theatre, Leeds	2nd	Sojourn in Havana	
Faithfully for Ever		The News Theatre, Birmingham	Aug. 2nd
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	July 12th	The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	2nd
Father of the Family (Secrets of Life Series)		Spills and Thrills	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Aug. 2nd	The News Theatre, Leeds	July 19th
Fire Chief		Stranger than Fiction (No. 85)	
The News Theatre, Manchester	July 26th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	19th
Follow the Sun		The News Cinema, Aberdeen	26th
The Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham	19th	Stranger than Fiction (No. 86)	
Fresh Fields (Fitness Wins Series)		The News Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 2nd
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	19th	The Baron and the Rose	
Furnaces of Industry		The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	July 19th
The Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow	19th	The Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham	26th
Going Places (No. 77)		The Tatler, Manchester	Aug. 2nd
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	19th	The Blue Danube	
Going Places (No. 84)		The Tatler Theatre, Chester	July 12th
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	12th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	Aug. 2nd
Growing Up		The Fighting Bear	
The News Theatre, Manchester	Aug. 26th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	July 26th
Health in War		The Fishing Bear	
The News Theatre, Newcastle	July 12th	The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Aug. 2nd
His Tale		The Private Life of a Bone	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	Aug. 2nd	The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	July 12th
The Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham	2nd	The Watchers	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	2nd	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	12th
Historic Virginia		The News Theatre, Birmingham	26th
The News Theatre, Bristol	2nd	The News Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 2nd
Hunting Wild Deer		The Night Watchman	
The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	July 19th	The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	July 12th
Ice Capers		This Cement Business	
The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	26th	The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	Aug. 2nd
The News Theatre, Manchester	Aug. 2nd	Trifles of Importance	
Is Idleness a Vice?		Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham	July 19th
The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	July 19th	Tatler News Theatre, Chester	Aug. 2nd
Island of the West Indies		News Theatre, Leeds	2nd
The News Theatre, Leeds	19th	News Theatre, Newcastle	2nd
Land of Smiles		Trouble Shooters	
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	12th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	July 19th
Malta		Trouble with Husbands	
The News Theatre, Birmingham	12th	The Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow	July 19th
March of Time No. 13		The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	19th
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	12th	The News Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 2nd
March of Time No. 14		Unconquerable Minesweepers	
The Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow	26th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	July 19th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	26th	War Front	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	26th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	19th
The News Theatre, Nottingham	Aug. 2nd	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	26th
Mattie Malneck and His Orchestra		Wartime Factory	
The News Theatre, Manchester	July 19th	The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	26th
Merchant Seamen		Washington Parade	
The News Theatre, Leeds	26th	The News Theatre, Birmingham	26th
The Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham	26th	Wedding Bells	
The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle	26th	The Tatler News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	12th
The Tatler Theatre, Chester	Aug. 2nd	The News Theatre, Birmingham	19th
Mexican Jumping Beans		The News Theatre, Leeds	26th
The News Theatre, Birmingham	July 12th	Western Waterways	
The News Theatre, Manchester	19th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	Aug. 2nd
Miracle at Lourdes		Wings Over the Empire	
The News Theatre, Leeds	19th	The News House, Nottingham	July 19th
Motor Cycling Stunting		Wisdom of the Wilds	
The News Theatre, Bristol	19th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Aug. 2nd
The News Theatre, Leeds	19th	Ye Olde Swappe Shoppe	
Motor Maniac		The Tatler Theatre, Chester	July 19th
The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Aug. 2nd		
Music in the Morgan Manner			
The News Theatre, Manchester	2nd		

DIAGRAM SEQUENCE

By FRANCIS RODKER

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A GLANCE at the majority of instructional films reveals a lack of understanding concerning the use of animated diagrams. Little enough has been said or written regarding this very important medium, yet even the employment of the most advanced technical devices of film production will not compensate for the effects of misuse or misapplication.

No matter what its subject may be, an instructional film must be able to entertain. By this it is not necessarily meant that we must laugh or be lightly amused as with popular fiction films, but that our attention must be wholly concentrated *without effort* before we can become receptive enough to absorb the information imparted on the screen.

After all, the instructional film has enough barriers to overcome; and the badly planned diagram is highly detrimental, especially to the future of these films.

When a diagram flashes up on the screen, something nearly always seems to go wrong. Maybe it is the change of medium which causes momentary confusion and makes readjustment of interest and mood necessary. During this readjustment, something of the film may be lost and refocussing of attention becomes very difficult. When this happens it is usually because the diagram has not been planned to fit in with the general mood of the film. It cannot be emphasised too highly that the mood created by a film is very important; to shatter it by incompetent diagram-planning is to ruin the film as a whole.

One barrier to be broken down is the subconscious schoolroom feeling we get when diagrams are shown on the screen. The fact that we are about to be taught something, is rather reminiscent of school where uninteresting drawings were chalked up on blackboards, and textbook illustrations were devoid of interest and life. This feeling must be dispelled by weaving diagrams into actuality in such a way as to make the audience unconscious of the change of medium, thus retaining uninterrupted attention. The diagram, itself, should only function as the best medium to explain that which cannot be clarified by other means.

In a recently completed film, the principles governing liquid pressure were defined by the use of glass bottles intercut with diagram. The opening sequences of animated liquids and bottles were soundly conceived, but later, in demonstrating further developments of these principles, the audience was plunged into diagram which, imitating the photography of actuality, created certain problems of a general nature well worth closer consideration. The near resemblance of diagram to actuality may be dangerous in many ways. Rarely can diagram and actuality be so

closely related as to be indistinguishable from one another and the inevitable slight differences are often confusing. We feel that there is, for some reason, a change in photography. We may wonder if we are looking at diagram or actuality. It does not matter which of the two media is more pleasing photographically, the same disturbing element results, and because of these things we lose concentration for a time, perhaps even missing information transmitted during this period. Another very important problem concerns drawn movement. This has been emphasised recently in a film dealing with the manufacture and assembly of mechanical parts. At one particular stage of the assembly, diagram is used to explain the working of the mechanism. In copying the tones of this mechanism the diagram exaggerates its own faults by its inability to repeat the subtle play of light and shade, and perfect movement of a machine. For this reason, the quality of drawn movement resembling reality must, because of resemblance, be of the same standard as reality—a standard not easily obtainable. It is suggested that one way of dealing with such an example would be to use the movement of actuality, in conjunction with a superimposed diagram to explain that which cannot be seen in actuality. Superimposition of these two media is a valuable adjunct and has on occasions been used with success. After all, the resources of the processing laboratories are at our disposal.

Returning to general considerations: simple though it may be, it is sometimes forgotten that diagram and actuality should be depicted from similar points of view and not disposed at conflicting angles which create confusion.

Whether or not a diagram should copy actuality is still controversial. It may be argued on the one hand that similarity in appearance between actuality and diagram helps to clarify their relationship. On the other hand it may be argued that a diagram should be as simple as possible, in other words a simple line drawing. The problem cannot be solved by one bold statement. We feel an urge to get away from the schoolroom style of drawing, and the three-dimensional half-tone rendering is certainly a step forward. It does not matter really what medium is used provided its use obtains maximum success. Each individual subject needs its own approach and this is determined by the problems involved and the nature of the film.

Here must be stressed the need of close collaboration between director and animator. It is essential for the director to discuss his conception of the film thoroughly with the animator in order that suitable diagrams may be designed.

One point, however, which should govern the

construction of every diagram sequence is the knowledge that only a certain proportion of the screen image is absorbed by the audience. The more complex the subject, the more we must build it up from simple beginnings point by point, bearing in mind that as each item is added it must be so emphasised that all the attention of the audience is focussed upon it.

A clear understanding of the foregoing principles of diagram construction has been very well exemplified in *Distillation*, a film dealing with crude oil and its by-products. The film depends for its statement almost entirely on animation and a small proportion of actuality. The usual problem arose in this film—that of linking actuality, diagram and model. Nothing was shown in diagram that could be shown to greater advantage in actuality. The bench-still distillation plant works in diagram and diagram only. It was not confused with actuality shots. The fullest use was made of half-tone three-dimensional rendering throughout all diagrams, for we were not competing with actuality. In the one instance where actuality was shown, the diagram was superimposed, irrelevant background dissolved away and this led without break of mood into diagram again. In effect the film shows the whole process of distillation in action and illusion is never destroyed. It does not matter nearly so much whether the apparatus looks real or not because the whole sequence is executed in one medium, and we are thus able to concentrate freely on the process. The use of simple line drawings would, in this film, have been inadequate and uninteresting. Such a medium would be out of keeping with the general treatment of the rest of the film, which was conceived in three-dimensional style throughout, with the fixed idea of making a dull subject as interesting as possible.

The use of sound effects, either natural or synthetic, with diagrams, does not seem to have gained a footing, and it is debatable whether this medium calls for effects at all. It would appear that a drawing, being such, would naturally have no sound. Nevertheless, if sound helps the diagram then why not use it? The animated diagram and sound cartoon are not comparable, and therefore lead to no useful conclusions in these respects. It is known, however, that some people react more readily to aural and others to visual stimulus; therefore, to suit both of these types it may be necessary to use sound (apart from commentary) to implement the diagram. Supposing, for instance, we wished to show by diagram what happens to the gear wheels of a motor car gear-box, through lack of oil. A grinding noise, increasing as the visual image depicts the surfaces of the teeth being destroyed, could be employed. Might not this suggested use of sound drive home the picture more forcibly?

The use of sound on diagram is a subject for research and experiment. Here is one direction of many in which we may look forward to future development; the animated diagram itself is one of the most flexible branches of film technique and well deserves continued study and the widest possible application.



Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns
 Bring summer's pleasant weather;
 The moorcock springs on whirring wings
 Among the blooming heather;
 Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
 Delights the weary farmer;
 And the moon shines bright when I rove at night
 To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
 The plover loves the mountains;
 The woodcock haunts the lonely dells,
 The soaring hern the fountains;
 Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves,
 The path of man to shun it;
 The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
 The spreading thorn the linnet.

But, Peggy dear, the ev'ning's clear,
 Thick flies the skimming swallow;
 The sky is blue, the fields in view
 All fading-green and yellow:
 Come let us stray our gladsome way,
 And view the charms of Nature;
 The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
 And ev'ry happy creature.

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